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SUBJECT: INTERVIEW OF IRAN'S DEPARTING AMBASSADOR TO OMAN

REF: MUSCAT 847

¶1. (SBU) Summary: In his farewell interview with the Omani press, Iran's ambassador to Oman discussed the Sultan's visit to Iran, the nuclear issue, U.S.-Iranian relations, and the Houthi rebellion in Yemen. In one statement he perhaps includes himself in a grouping of Iranian officials who could reach out to the West. End Summary.

¶2. (U) After a posting of three years, the Iranian ambassador to Oman, Murtadha Rahimi, is returning to Tehran. Prior to departure, he gave an interview to the private Arabic daily "al Shabiba," published on December 6. "Shabiba's" English-language sister publication, "The Times of Oman" summarized the interview on December 7.

¶3. (SBU) Rahimi praised the Sultan and stated that there is a strong link between Iran and Oman, but his only clear statement was that the policies of both countries are based on "respecting each other and ensuring a peaceful solution to any problem." He spoke at length about Qaboos's visit to Iran in August (reftel). He used the major part of the interview to recount the visit as covered in the Omani press at the time. Rahimi reviewed in detail the seven bilateral agreements signed during that trip, as reported reftel.

¶4. (SBU) Responding to the interviewer's allegation that the Iranian nuclear program is for military purposes, the outgoing ambassador noted "some powerful countries try to spread such rumors to refute the Iranian nuclear program because they do not want the Iranian nuclear program to exist. In fact, these countries have unlimited nuclear stores, however the world could now be sure that Iran does not intend to use its nuclear program for military purposes. Everyone is aware now that Iran's nuclear program is 100 percent peaceful." He said the program is for the entire Islamic world. He continued that "these countries which are standing against Iran are not prepared to accept the idea of the evolution of Islamic countries and thus Iran with its nuclear program has been the focus of attention of many countries."

¶5. (SBU) On reports of Iran's support for the Houthi rebellion in northern Yemen, Rahimi similarly noted that there are those who "distort Iran's image, instill fear in the hearts of communities and disseminate the distinction between Iran and other countries. ... What would Iran benefit from supporting Houthis? All what have been stressed are just rumors and the Western media takes an advantage to publish it and to emphasize wrong facts."

¶6. (SBU) However, when asked about America, Rahimi struck an interesting note: "I think that American policy has changed somewhat after Obama governance [sic.] ... The previous policy created alienation and anger among many of the communities, but now

there is a kind of understanding." His previous complaint was against "powerful countries;" he did not call the United States by name at that point. [Comment: While Rahimi for the most part offers the standard Iranian litany, this statement places him among the Iranian officials who could possibly see a change in Iranian policy. During his tenure in Muscat he was seen by his colleagues as a moderate, reasonable Iranian diplomat. End Comment.]
Schmierer